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Assistance on the Land

IN a province much occupied with industrialization it is welcome relief to come across some forward thought being given to the status of those who wish to pass their lives on the land. The extended and more liberal proposals offered in the Legislature this week by Agriculture Minister Steacy covering provincial help with land clearing seem practicable and to the point. As Mr. Steacy explained, the changes are devised to help those who are already established and wish to enlarge productive acreage, and also to benefit homesteaders who take up land in future.

The basic change is simple enough. It is that larger loans and more time to repay them will be incorporated in the Province's land settlement scheme if the House agrees. In place of a limit of $1,000 loan repayable in four years at four per cent, the amended scheme would embrace individual advances up to $5,000 repayable in 15 years at the same interest rate. Genuine intention to reclaim untilled land for farming purposes, coupled with due performance on the contract when entered would be the safeguards of the scheme. The result, however, could well be a much more practical measure of help to settlers than they have received under the original plan sponsored by the department of agriculture.

Certainly in some fashion British Columbia will have to find a means of making life on the land more attractive to larger numbers, if those already there are to be induced to carry on and others added to take care of the constantly growing population. It is uneconomic to import the commonest staples of household needs when they can be reproduced within the province with some assurance of steady marketing. An export trade in surpluses there will always be, but the time is coming when British Columbia will need to produce a good deal more food directly on its own account. Land use and skills cannot be learned in a hurry, so that whatever is to be done to meet this situation in the future should be put in hand now.

Easement in land-clearing credits on a workable and supervised basis will not supply all that is needed, but it would make a useful start on one phase of a subject which has had far too little attention on its merits.

His Job Is to Fight

MAYOR Scurrah has been assured by Transport Minister Hees that the civic protest against any dropping by TCA of its local air franchise will receive serious consideration. He has also been advised by the air transport board that objection to assumption of these local flights by PWA will receive recognition should a public hearing be held on the application.

It is difficult to believe that this matter can be settled without a public hearing. It is difficult to believe also that the transport board could possibly authorize the relegation of Victoria to the end of a small-scale feeder route, which is what abdication by TCA would mean. The board cannot be unaware of the mounting growth of civic, business and community anger in connection with this matter, now added to by Saanich in equally legitimate protest against such a move.

One trusts that Victoria's MP, Mr. A. deB. McPhillips, is also aware of the sentiments of his constituents, whose interests he should be quick to guard. His amazing attitude, conveyed in a letter saying it does not seem to be realized that TCA intends to drop the Victoria - Vancouver-Seattle run, needs swift revision. There is a lack of clarity about TCA's intentions—and it is the duty of this corporation to make its position unequivocably clear without delay—but there is no doubt about where Mr. McPhillips should stand.

In his turn the federal member must realize that Victoria has no intention of being fobbed off with an inadequate feeder link to the mainland. It demands its proper status as the western terminus of transcontinental flight, with a continuation of the type of service and resources which TCA commands. Nothing less is acceptable, either from the standpoint of security or of the personal and business needs of this area. It is Mr. McPhillips' job to pursue Victoria's case to the limit; that is what he was elected to do—look after the interests of those who sent him to Ottawa.

What Inflation Does to the Old

SOME of the most harrowing scenes witnessed in courts of any kind are those enacted annually in the temporary courts set up to hear appeals against property assessments. Each year this court is placed in the distressing position of having to explain to anxious elderly people the cruel fact that inability to pay higher taxes is not a valid ground for a reduction of the assessment. Once in a while there is humor in the assessment court hearings, but not often; mostly the circumstances related to the board of citizens contain the elements of tragic despair.

It is in these courts that the spectator sees some of the evil manifestations of economic inflation. Old people make up the largest proportion of those who in recent years have gone to the assessment court in vain hope of relief from the crushing burden of taxes on their homes. In many instances these homes and their often meagre comforts are all the property that the elderly owners have been able to cling to: their last remnants of pride and independence. Through many long years they have maintained their homes, brought up families in them, paid their way in the community without assistance from the state, provided themselves with an income which but for the cancer of inflation would have taken care of all their simple wants until death.

Their reward today is to be faced with a tax bill to provide services and amenities from which they are too old to derive benefit; for frills and facilities of modern education and living which they had no opportunity to enjoy in their own working lifetime and which come too late now to be anything but a millstone. If the burden becomes insupportable there is nothing these old people can do but to sell their homes and move into lodgings or accept the humiliation of living with relatives.

That, among its many other evil influences, is what inflation does to the old.

Interpreting the News

U.K. Election Prospect

By FRASER WIGHTON
Reuters Staff Correspondent

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain's latest domestic developments are upsetting political prophets who had confidently forecast a general election in late spring or early summer.

The three main factors confusing the issue are:

Unemployment, which this winter has passed the 500,000 mark.

The shocks which both Conservatives and Socialists continue to receive from by-elections.

The latest opinion polls, which suggest neither of the two main political parties can yet claim a general election victory is in their grasp.

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It has been widely accepted that unemployment will be a key factor in the timing of Prime Minister Macmillan's appeal to the country—by April, 1960, at the latest—for a new mandate for his Conservative government.

At present, the number of unemployed shades the picture of a prosperous Britain that is reflected in a better balance of trade with the world and greatly increased gold reserves.

Conservatives have been hoping unemployment figures would begin to drop sharply from the seasonal peak as spring approaches.

But political commentators now suggest the January total of unemployed will be considerably over the estimate, due largely to an extensive weather freeze, and that this will spark new political controversy.

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Labor politicians argue that the government's relaxation of the credit squeeze it applied to halt inflation means little to voters in the areas depressed by unemployment.

Meanwhile the latest by-election result at Southend West last week slashed a former government majority by more than half, and an intervening Liberal candidate sent the Labor nominee to the bottom of the poll.

Falling far short

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

IN a ceremony rather unusual for Victoria the city council enrolled a new Freeman yesterday in an atmosphere of appropriate dignity. I was not present, naturally, but like yourself I followed the news reports with interest.

In its more than century-old existence Victoria has named only four Freemen, including the newest one, which indicates this is a very special honor indeed.

In the case of Hon. Frank Ross it is all the more so because he is the first lieutenant-governor to be so graced. That means of course, if it means anything, that he has carved for himself a peculiar niche of his own as the royal representative in British Columbia.

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At a banquet recently I heard him say with eloquent simplicity that it was a matter of pride for him to represent his sovereign in the land to which he came with little but which had given him such great opportunities.

And the manner of his remark revealed the quality of the man.

It was at this same function, also, that a speaker directed a thrust at yours truly — apropos the fact that His Honor was born in Glasgow—reminding me he went back to the Highlands soon after birth. I was sorry I couldn't reply, for I would have liked to cite his long journey to the Clydeside for this purpose as further evidence of his good judgment.

But that is by the way. I don't know His Honor personally. Except for a passing greeting at his New Year levee I haven't met him. My admiration for a man doing a splendid job in high office is derived from the source given credit at yesterday's civic ceremony—his public service.

I suppose there are compensations in being a lieutenant-governor, a sense of achievement perhaps or a thrill in holding an eminent position. One would have to be a lieutenant-governor to appreciate the sensation, but he would be a queer individual who did not find pleasure and satisfaction in such a circumstance.

To be the incumbent of Government House is an enviable attainment.

It is not all milk and honey and red carpets, of course. It has its wearing and tedious routine, its continual round of official functions that must tire even so dedicated a man as Mr. Ross. And as everyone must have noticed he has extended his duties to an utmost limit.

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It is his willingness to be of service, above and beyond the call of duty, that singles the present lieutenant-governor out for special mention. Not all of his predecessors have been so kindly, so human in their approach or so all-embracing in their sympathies. Not all of the Freemen of Victoria have been so deserving of honor, either.

No man worth his salt can shine without his wife, as I heard Mr. Ross say at the particular function I mentioned, and the chatelaine of Government House must be included in any tribute paid to him. Together they have shown the kind of gentleness associated with persons of fine heart and mind, and have enriched the amenities of their dual responsibility.

This column does not easily worship at the feet of the eminent, but it feels the city council has done well in making the Hon. Frank Ross its fourth Freeman.

Gerald Waring

Reports from Ottawa

IT was perhaps natural that the Conservative government should be suspected of wanting to revive the practice of granting titles of nobility to Canadians.

After all, it was the Tories who revived titles in 1934, after 15 years in which this country went knightless, bart.-less and earl-less. Might they not do it again.

The relapse of the Bennett regime was appropriately emphasized in a recent news dispatch which hung a long recital of the history of Canadian titles on one bit of capital gossip. "Reports are circulating here," the story said, "that Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, governor-general, is to be made a peer of the realm."

True, reports of this kind had been circulating. Way I heard the story some weeks ago was that Massey wanted a peerage to top off his seven years as governor-general. But I heard nothing to indicate he was going to get one. The story was just gossip; not worth reporting.

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However, I must admit that publication of the gossip has had a salutary effect. It cleared the air. It got Prime Minister Diefenbaker on his feet in the Commons to declare that the report's "only foundation is in the mind of the person who wrote the article."

Parenthetically, I'd like to observe here that more and more lately we've been treated to this kind of reverse journalism. Scoop-hungry reporters, frustrated by the silence of cabinet ministers and government officials—the latter on pain of ministerial displeasure or worse—have put unverified reports into print, only to have them knocked down. The day Diefenbaker denied the peerage-for-Massey story, he also denied a report that the government would make a Washington-style federal district out of Ottawa and Hull.

Anyway, now we know — or we think we know—where the government stands on the titles question. Diefenbaker is estopped from asking the Queen to ennoble Massey—just as he is estopped from taking over a lodge in the Gatineau Park as his summer home — by his words in the Commons. And the inference on the titles business is that the government is going to eschew any revival of these useless anachronisms so alien to the anti-class sentiment of the Canadian people.

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If Massey wants to end his days as M'Lord Vincent, Viscount Combine of Wheatfields, Diefenbaker's words in the Commons will be a stinging disappointment. But I suggest that he will ennoble himself more in the hearts of his countrymen by remaining just plain Mr. Massey.

As one writer put it recently in discussing the subject of titles in The Queen's Quarterly, "Those Canadians who, because of their blood, or wealth, or attainments, demand the general deference of their fellows must either be extremely selective in their social contacts or else must be prepared to face the robust denial of their claims. In short, they do not belong to a class; they have merely acquired a complex."

Massey is generally acclaimed for having done a magnificent job as the country's first Canadian-born governor. This esteem does not need a phony title to top it off. Nor should it ever be considered fitting that a man should be rewarded for service as governor-general. The privilege of serving the sovereign and the nation in this exalted position is its own reward. And the same goes for the prime ministership.

The Packsack

Of GREGORY CLARK

ON the principle that the children of excessively tidy and orderly parents rejoice, when they grow up and get free, in being gloriously untidy and disorderly, it may be that the present ga-ga atmosphere that distinguishes so much of modern art, popular music and other forms of expression is the assertion of a sub-conscious or unconscious revolt of the rising generation against the dreadful discipline, gruesome functionalism and grim squareness of this wonderful Mechanized Era. The contemptuous word "square" in the language of our young, may come, indeed, from our new downtown architecture.

They are fleeing from their environment. A look of ecstasy comes on their faces when Jonah Jones squeezes the notes from his trumpet. Jonah would have been flung out of any respectable bugle band back in the days when I was a bugler. He just can't hold his notes. He squeezes them in all right, to start with. They are on key. But he squeezes too hard; with the result that every bar ends with a weird little grunt, squeak or uh! definitely off key. That is high style.

It may be more than that. It may be the bugle call of the revolt.

But you should have heard our old bugler sergeant sound reveille. No bloops at the end of every bar. It was music, even at 6 a.m.

Fun, Fact and Fiction

Child psychiatrists no longer seem to blame comic books for causing juvenile delinquency. Maybe that's because today's child psychiatrists grew up reading comic books.

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To the blonde dancer who had just finished her act in the floor show, the rich young man said deploringly: "Tell me, why do you, a beautiful, talented and apparently well educated girl, dance in a sordid joint like this?"

"I don't know," she answered, "unless it is that I meet a great many more prominent young men here than I did when I worked in the library."

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Some perfumes smell better than others, but fortunately the odor of frying bacon has been pretty much standardized.

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It is reported that women's fashions are back to normal. In fashions as in economics "normal" is something we have often heard about but don't recall ever having seen.

Washington Angle

Coersive Practices

By DAVID LAWRENCE

BIGNESS in economic power always winds up sooner or later in the regulatory web of the federal government. The labor unions of America, which in 1935 successfully put through the Wagner Act to secure federal supervision of employers in collective bargaining, are finding themselves today likely to be drawn involuntarily into the hands of governmental monitors and disciplinarians.

Racketeering and the over-reaching of a few labor bosses brought on the debacle which President Eisenhower has sought to deal with in his latest recommendations to Congress. But the political power of the labor unions is such that it will be surprising if any really effective legislation gets through Congress this year or next. The president nevertheless feels he must put his views on record.

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Strangely enough, while there's a hue and cry about obeying the "law of the land" and assuring the observance of "civil rights" where the integration-segregation controversy is involved, no such solicitude is being shown by the so-called "liberals" with respect to two major violations of the constitution and of the laws of the land in the field of labor.

It is a violation of federal law for labor unions to contribute to political campaigns, but they pursue schemes which are no less evasive than those used by persons who try to get around integration decisions of the supreme court. Secretary of Labor James Mitchell, for instance, told his news conference the other day that, as a "moral obligation," labor union leaders should stop spending union funds to support candidates for state and local political office.

"I don't believe," he said, "the funds that a union member pays as dues or initiation fees should be used for political purposes, because his contributions might be used to help a candidate he opposes."

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Senator Goldwater, Republican, of Arizona, describes the "civil rights" problem of the north in terms of the refusal of many states to pass laws that will guarantee the individual the right to stay in that job if he is efficient, no matter what the labor union may say in opposition. Today many contracts provide that the employer must fire an employee if, after 30 days on the job, he is unwilling to surrender his constititional beliefs and join an organization which uses his dues money to support political candidates he does not favor.

One would have thought that, in these days of enthusiasm for federal pre-emption of state rights, there would be a demand to secure the protection of the individual citizen from the two abuses noted above. Certainly the president's recommendations to Congress have not mentioned either problem.

The union leaders, however, are preparing to tackle the subject by a proposed federal law denying the states the right to interfere with any contracts that deprive a worker of his civil rights.

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The unions will attempt also to amend any bills proposed to Congress of an anti-racketeering nature. Indeed, by the tacking on of amendments on other subjects unpalatable to management, the chances are that all labor legislation will be killed at this session of Congress. The labor unions, by their contributions of millions of dollars to elect members of Congress, appear today to have enough strength to stop the legislative process if it affects them adversely.

The president's recommendations, to be sure, are courageous as far as they go. Mr. Eisenhower says the object is to safeguard the workers' funds against misuse and "to protect the rights and freedoms of individual union members, including the basic right to free and secret election of officers." This means putting the regulatory hand of the federal government on the internal operations of labor unions, just as today the same kind of supervision is exercised over the affairs of corporations.

The president's proposal "to protect the public and innocent third parties from unfair and coercive practices such as boycotting and blackmail picketing" cannot be persuasively rebutted by the labor unions. But they have the political power to suppress any really effective regulation of abuses.